

MUSCLE BUILDING PHASE

GAINING MUSCLE MASS REQUIRES...



A caloric surplus



Adequate protein intake



Exercise program that progressively overloads the muscles.

THE PHASE when an individual purposely focuses on gaining muscle for performance or aesthetic purposes goes by many names - gaining, massing, bulking, muscle building. Following an appropriate training and nutrition program is a very important part of this phase. Simply eating more calories or more protein will not produce more muscle. In fact, if you are not strength training, excess calorie intake will result in gains of mostly body fat, not muscle. The increase in size is due to a caloric surplus and the shape (body composition) of the individual is influenced by the training. Simply eating more food doesn't mean that weight will go to the muscle so it's important to train with purpose.

Muscle growth is a slow process that shouldn't be rushed. Rushing it can result in fat gain rather than muscle growth. Muscle growth is naturally a slow process and unlike fat loss, it's less visible and harder to measure. To ensure muscle gain is happening, it's important to measure performance progress as well. For example, tracking how much weight you are lifting and how many reps you are able to complete can be a helpful way to measure if muscle strength is increasing and muscle growth is happening.

Real Life Application

Eating to purposely gain usually means a few hundred calories over maintenance level calories. It shouldn't be looked at as an invitation to overeat or work in extra junk food. In addition, this phase should be done when an individual is lean enough to influence quality mass gain. If an individual has too much excess body fat, a gain phase can add unwanted fat much quicker than muscle resulting in less than ideal changes in body composition.

Main Takeaway

A gain phase usually follows a maintenance phase and only requires a few hundred more calories and a good training program. Much like a fat loss phase, those calories most likely will change over time as the body adapts. Do not rush a muscle gain phase and make sure your body is primed for it. Set performance goals, and make it a point to still manage your nutrition well even if it feels like you have more calories to consume.

Resources

We have a number of resources that help explain the concept of energy balance and how this can be related to muscle building.

- The [importance of protein](#).
- You can also find more information on muscle building in [this blog](#).
- And [here](#), you can find a deep dive into how we gain weight, which can also be applied to building muscle.



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